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Notes and Opinions.

"The Homelessness of Christ."—In this department of the BIBLICAL WORLD for November 1896 attention was called to a new interpretation by Professor Bruce of the passage, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have lodging places, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:19, 20). This interpretation was given by Professor Bruce in his volume *With Open Face* (published in 1896), and also in the *Expositor* for September of the same year. It has at least aroused thought and comment upon a passage heretofore often accepted in its most literal sense. In a word, the new interpretation is this: "The answer of Jesus refers to his spiritual situation, the homelessness of his soul in relation to the thought and religion of his times, rather than to his physical condition. This theory lays special emphasis upon the fact that Jesus is addressing a scribe, a member of a class closely allied to those religionists of the day with whom the teachings of Jesus were most at variance."

In reply to Professor Bruce, Rev. John Reid of Dundee, Scotland, in the *Expository Times* for February, agrees with Professor Bruce in making the answer of Jesus turn upon the scribal profession of the petitioner. He, however, differs radically in demanding a literal and not a parabolic content in the refusal of Jesus. His idea of the passage is briefly this: "A parabolic interpretation of an historical incident is only admissible when the literal or historical interpretation is destitute of practical or spiritual significance. If we accept Meyer's view the true historical position of the passage is indicated by its position in Matthew's gospel. At this early stage in the life of Jesus it was not apparent that he was spiritually an alien. He still attended the synagogue services. The incidents which intensified the opposition between Jesus and the scribes had not yet taken place. The reply could have no spiritual force to the scribe. The saying is best regarded literally as a statement of physical hardships to be endured by him and his companion disciples. The itineracy of Jesus involved an almost continual uncertainty of shelter. Hospitality may have been refused more than once. At times the largeness of the company might compel him

and his followers to spend the night in the open air. This statement of hardships to be endured by him and his disciples corresponds with the whole impression of the gospel records. The suggestion that the scribe was possessed of means is needless and unlikely when we consider how few rich men were attracted to Jesus. With greater likelihood he may be regarded as a poor but godly scribe, of the spirit of Hillel, whom the life and words of Jesus had attracted. We may also set aside the other current theories concerning the earthly aims of the questioner, his rashness, impulsiveness, and self-confidence."

"How, then, are we to interpret the saying so as to give a real personal application to him? (1) The scribe was evidently already a disciple (see Matt. 8:21). He wished to be something more, namely, one of the little band of chosen personal companions who were to be with Jesus in his public ministry. (2) The offer of the scribe was made shortly after the Sermon on the Mount. Just prior to this Jesus had chosen from his disciples the twelve men who were to be his companions in his itinerant ministry. The scribe, possibly present when the choice was made, had been disappointed in being passed by. His attachment for and his desire to show the strength and fullness of his devotion to the Master may have been as great as that of any of the chosen few. This was the hour of separation. He felt that he could not bear to be left behind and so made this one effort to secure the desired relationship. (3) The words on the very face of them refer to physical hardships. We must look for some physical disability on the part of the volunteer to whom no other objection was made. He was a scribe by occupation, unaccustomed to hardships, unfitted for a life involving severe exposure. That this physical disability was the barrier becomes even more likely when we consider how many hardy fishermen, men inured to toil and accustomed to exposure, were called into the band of Jesus' personal attendants. Witness also the long and vigorous life which tradition assigns to almost all of the apostles notwithstanding severe and dangerous experiences. (4) Had Jesus spoken harshly to the scribe is it likely that the other two disciples who hesitated at the last moment to follow him into the boat would have felt at liberty to ask for delay or to urge the claims of filial duty and family affection? Jesus must not have in this little band anyone who might not endure the physical strain of the itinerant ministry. The weakly will always have opportunity and scope for serving him, but it is the strong who must take the field."

C. L. G.